

# UB Law Forum

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## Clinical Legal Education News

UB Law Forum

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# Long days, vital work at the U.S.-Mexico border

**T**hey started work at 7 a.m. and typically called it quits around 9 p.m. Working in teams, they interviewed 60 or 70 people every day, for a week straight.

The flood of people coming to the nation's southern border seeking asylum continues unabated, and this past January our students stepped up to provide some much-needed support to these refugees. Six law students were part of **Assistant Clinical Professor Nicole Hallett's** U.S.-Mexico Border Clinic course. They traveled to Dilley, Texas, to counsel women being held with their children at the South Texas Family Residential Center.

In conjunction with the CARA Family Detention Pro Bono Project, the students worked under a practice order to advance the cases of detainees – many of them from violence-plagued Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras – who are seeking asylum in the United States.

Serving 321 clients in all, the students and their professor met with asylum seekers, heard their stories and worked with them to craft the testimony they would give before an asylum officer. The goal: to help these women demonstrate that they had a “credible fear” of harm if they returned to their home countries, and that their fear would qualify them for asylum under U.S. law.

“They needed to show a significant possibility that they would prevail at a hearing on the merits,” Hallett says. “Every single woman had a credible fear, but that’s not enough under U.S. asylum law. We helped them figure out how to tell their story and what they should focus on.”

“All of these women had suffered trauma; they were all afraid for their lives and the lives of their families and kids. But they wouldn’t have any chance at all without representation. You’re essentially giving them a chance.”



View a video about the Clinic's work

Left to right: Sarah M. Grimaldi '20 (J.D.), Deonna M. Jones '19 (J.D.), Charles R. Terranova '20 (J.D.), Rosellen D. Marohn '20 (J.D.), Heather R. Kimmins '20 (J.D.), Leighann Ramirez '20 (J.D./MSW), Dijana Savija (Ph.D. candidate, College of Arts and Sciences), Teresa Watson '19 (MSW) and Assistant Clinical Professor Nicole Hallett

**Rosellen Marohn '20**, one of the clinic students, says the government's restrictions made the work difficult on a human level. For example, no touching was allowed, not even a friendly pat on the arm. For their clients, she says, “it can be very intimidating and scary. We were dealing with women who were meeting with someone they had never met before, who may not speak their language, working through an interpreter.”

“The whole experience felt dehumanizing in a way, because you were restricted in how you could share your humanity. But they’re still people. Especially in the media when we talk about immigration and immigrants, we forget that it’s a mom or a daughter or someone’s sister.”



# A pathway to justice through experiential learning

## #UBLawResponds

Through clinical programs and practicum courses, UB School of Law student attorneys use their new legal skills to provide access to justice where it's needed most. Whether drafting new legislation or advocating for the otherwise unrepresented, our students are stepping up and standing out as champions and change-makers.



### Family Violence & Women's Rights

#### *Educating our teens*

Student attorneys joined forces with New York State Assembly Member **Monica P. Wallace '94** to draft proposed state legislation requiring school districts to offer age-appropriate curricula in teen dating violence prevention to students in grades 7 to 12.



### Civil Liberties & Transparency Clinic

#### *Ensuring accountability*

**Orlando Dickson '19** and **Colton Kells '20**

drafted policy reports for the Buffalo Police Advisory Board and testified before the Common Council's Police Oversight Committee on the appropriate use of body cams.



### Health Justice Law & Policy Practicum

#### *Developing partnerships*

Law students have joined students from UB's School of Medicine to provide a holistic approach to health care. The student-run Lighthouse Clinic has offered health care services to residents of Buffalo's East Side since 2001. Law students will expand the care patients receive, helping to identify legal issues they may be facing and providing remedies through the legal system.



### Puerto Rico Recovery Assistance Legal Clinic

#### *Aiding in disaster recovery*

The law school remains committed to the post-Hurricane Maria recovery of Puerto Rico. Law students, faculty and staff have returned to the island to provide continued legal assistance to its residents and expand their legal work in the areas of resiliency policy and food justice.



### Environmental Advocacy Clinic

#### *Protecting our wetlands*

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After six years and approximately 1,500 hours of legal and policy work, EAC student attorneys obtained designation of the Niagara River

Corridor as the United States' 40th Ramsar site, recognizing it as a wetland of international importance.



### Community Justice Clinic

#### *Advocating for fair treatment*

The Community Justice Clinic tackled the problem of wage theft in Buffalo's restaurant industry, filing suit on behalf of several employees of a local restaurant alleging wage theft and sexual harassment by their employer.



### Animal Law Clinic

#### *Providing a voice for the voiceless*

The City of Buffalo passed a new law prohibiting the tethering of dogs for more than an hour in extreme weather conditions. The law was drafted by UB School of Law student attorneys.



### Veterans Legal Practicum

#### *Serving those who served*

Practicum students staff dedicated help desks on campus and in the community to provide veterans with general information and referrals to address their unique legal needs.

